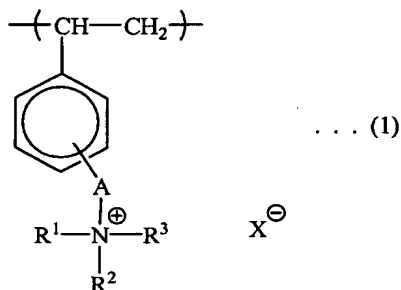


IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Previously Presented): An anion exchange membrane comprising a resin phase which contains from 20 to 96 mass% of a polymer having repeating units represented by the following formula (1):



wherein A is a C₃₋₈ alkylene group or an alkyleneoxyalkyl group having a total carbon number of from 4 to 9, each of R¹, R² and R³ is a hydrogen atom, a C₁₋₆ alkyl group or a hydroxyalkyl group, and X⁻ is an anion, and wherein any hydrogen atom bonded to the benzene ring may be substituted by an alkyl group or a halogen atom, and from 4 to 80 mass% of a thermoplastic polymer having no ion exchange groups, mixed substantially uniformly.

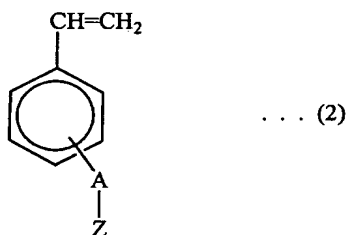
Claim 2 (Original): The anion exchange membrane according to Claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic polymer having no ion exchange groups is a thermoplastic polymer having an unsaturated bond ratio in its main chain of at most 3%.

Claim 3 (Original): The anion exchange membrane according to Claim 1, which comprises the resin phase and a porous membrane-supporting material.

Claim 4 (Original): The anion exchange membrane according to Claim 3, wherein the polymer having repeating units represented by the formula (1) is penetrated in the porous membrane-supporting material, and the content of the repeating units represented by the formula (1) in the membrane-supporting material is from 0.05 to 0.7 time the content of such repeating units in the resin phase.

Claim 5 (Original): A process for producing an anion exchange membrane, which comprises:

mixing a thermoplastic polymer having no ion exchange groups with a polymerizable component comprising a monomer of the formula (2):



wherein A is a C₃₋₈ alkylene group or an alkyleneoxyalkyl group having a total carbon number of from 4 to 9, and Z is chlorine, bromine, iodine, a hydroxyl group, a tosyl group, a primary to tertiary amine, or a -NR¹R²R³ group, wherein each of R¹, R² and R³ is a hydrogen atom, a C₁₋₆ alkyl group or a hydroxyl group, and wherein any hydrogen atom bonded to the benzene ring may be substituted by an alkyl group or a halogen atom, or a mixture of the monomer of the formula (2) and a monomer copolymerizable therewith, and then

polymerizing the polymerizable component,

wherein process is carried out in the following order:

(i) mixing the thermoplastic polymer with the polymerizable component of formula (2), then

(ii) polymerizing the polymerizable component, then

(iii) converting Z to an ammonium salt.

Claim 6 (Original): The process for producing an anion exchange membrane according to Claim 5, wherein the monomer of the formula (2) is used in an amount of from 20 to 96 mass%, based on the total amount of the polymerizable component and the thermoplastic polymer having no ion exchange groups.

Claim 7 (Original): The process for producing an anion exchange membrane according to Claim 5, wherein the thermoplastic polymer is mixed with the polymerizable component by impregnating the polymerizable component to the membrane-form molded product of the thermoplastic polymer having no ion exchange groups.

Claim 8 (Original): The process for producing an anion exchange membrane according to Claim 5, wherein a solution obtained by mixing the thermoplastic polymer having no ion exchange groups with the polymerizable component, is formed into a membrane, and then, the polymerizable component is polymerized.

Claim 9 (Original): The process for producing an anion exchange membrane according to Claim 8, wherein the solution obtained by mixing the thermoplastic polymer having no ion exchange groups with the polymerizable component, is impregnated to a porous membrane-supporting material and formed into a membrane, and then, the polymerizable component is polymerized.

Claim 10 (Original): The process for producing an anion exchange membrane according to Claim 9, wherein the porous membrane-supporting material is irradiated with

electron rays or γ -rays before or when the solution obtained by mixing the thermoplastic polymer having no ion exchange groups with the polymerizable component, is impregnated thereto.

Claim 11 (Original): A solution treating apparatus comprising an electrodialytic mechanism employing the anion exchange membrane as defined in Claim 1.

Claim 12 (Original): A solution treating apparatus comprising a diffusion dialytic mechanism employing the anion exchange membrane as defined in Claim 1.

Claim 13 (New): The anion exchange membrane according to Claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic polymer consists of polymerized monomer units that do not contribute to cross-linking.

Claim 14 (New): The anion exchange membrane according to Claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic polymer does not have any ion exchange groups.

Claim 15 (New): The anion exchange membrane according to Claim 1, wherein the polymer having repeating units of the monomer represented by formula (1) is obtained from a polymer consisting of 4-(4-bromobutyl)styrene, styrene, and divinylbenzene, and the thermoplastic polymer consists of polymerized monomer units that do not contribute to cross-linking.

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Claim 16 (New): The anion exchange membrane according to Claim 1, further comprising at least one of a polypropylene or polyethylene cloth impregnated in the resin phase.

Claim 17 (New): The anion exchange membrane according to Claim 1, wherein A is an alkylene oxyalkyl group having a total carbon number of from 4 to 9.

Claim 18 (New): The process as claimed in Claim 5, wherein Z is at least one of chlorine, bromine, and iodine.

Claim 19 (New): The anion exchange membrane according to Claim 1, wherein the polymer having repeating units of the monomer represented by formula (1) is obtained from a polymer consisting of 4-(4-bromobutyl)styrene, styrene, and divinylbenzene, and the thermoplastic polymer consists of polymerized monomer units that do not contribute to cross-linking, wherein the thermoplastic polymer is present in an amount of 15 parts by mass based on 100 parts by mass of the polymer consisting of 4-(4-bromobutyl)styrene, styrene, and divinylbenzene.

Claim 20 (New): The process according to Claim 5, wherein the polymerizable component contains only monomers that do not contribute to cross linking, and the thermoplastic polymer consists of polymerized monomer units that do not contribute to cross-linking.

BASIS FOR THE AMENDMENT

Claims 1-20 are active in the present application. Claim 5 has been amended to state that the polymerizable component is mixed with the thermoplastic polymer and subsequently polymerized. Support for the amendment is found in Example 1 (e.g., page 18, lines 9-23).

Claims 13-20 are new claims. Support for new Claim 13 is found on page 9, lines 24-26.

Support for new Claim 14 is found on page 4, lines 7-10. Support for new Claim 15 is found in Example 1. Support for new Claim 16 is found in Example 1. Support for new Claim 17 is found on page 6, lines 8-21. Support for new Claim 18 is found on page 9, line 4. Support for new Claims 19 and 20 is found in Example 1 and as noted for Claims 13 and 14 above.

No new matters are believed to have been added by this amendment.